

Giant cable companies should not be permitted to grow larger. Further consolidation in the cable industry is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules that must be re-established to serve the public interest.

The concentration of power and control over distribution of media is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are under the operation of a handful of giant corporations.

If Comcast and Time Warner are allowed to merge with Adelphia, the two companies will control nearly 50 percent of the national market. This level of concentration in the cable industry will lead to higher consumer rates and

lower quality
service.

Since passage of the
Telecommunications
Act of 1996 and the
“deregulation” of
cable, consumers
have seen their
rates jump an
average of 59
percent — with some
areas experiencing
even more dramatic
increases.

We are required to
buy channels we
don’t want or need
because the cable
operators bundle
them together. The
quality of customer
service often
reflects the fact
that cable
television is not a
competitive market.

Meanwhile, the cost
of cable modem
service remains out
of reach for many
households, holding
constant for years
and selectively
underserving rural
and low-income
Americans. The

American people are watching the digital divide widen even as the need for access to high-speed networks increases.

Cable companies have become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments.

In many communities, the truly independent sources of local news, information and culture come from the public channels produced at the local access centers.

Unfortunately, local channels lack the resources to produce the programming that citizens want and need.

The last thing we need is to reward the anti-competitive actions of cable giants by permitting greater consolidation in ownership, reducing competition, and encouraging more of the same.

In my small home town the city joined with tow other nearby cities to build, from the ground up, a fiber optic cable system that currently offers every channel possible (including two PBS channels, two public access channels and educational programming to the local schools and library). My sister, who still lives there, pays just over one half the price I pay in a month for cable TV and broadband and the amount of programming she receives is far

better than mine
from Comcast. In
addition, she has a
choice. There is
another provider in
the area. This is
happening in three
very small towns in
South Georgia (so
there can be no
economy of scale)
and, I understand,
the cities will
soon be making money
after only a few
years of
infrastructure
installment from the
ground up! People
are hearing about
this and moving into
these towns.

I remember when
cable started, they
had to make good on
their promises to
serve the community,
and politicians made
companies bid
against each other
for the franchise.
Today, cable access
is more important
than ever and in a
sorer state than
ever. Please don't
allow these
companies to

continue to gouge
the American
consumer and deliver
an inferior product
that is contributing
to the dumbing down
of America, when
exactly the opposite
is possible.

Thank you for your
time and serious
consideration.